

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

----- 085154

P 291206 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2960

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 7722

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AFSP

SUBJECT: STAFF REDUCTION

REF: STATE 87648

1. FOLLOWING THE RECENT DISTURBANCES WHICH WERE THE WORST IN LEBANON SINCE THE 1967 WAR, IT WOULD SEEM ONLY PRUDENT TO CONSIDER REDUCING THE SIZE OF THE EMBASSY STAFF. ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION IN LEBANON IS NOW CALM IT REMAINS UNCERTAIN BECAUSE THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF THE ROLE AND STATUS OF THE FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON HAS NOT BEEN RESOLVED NOR IS IT LIKELY TO BE IN THE ABSENCE OF A SETTLEMENT OF THE PALESTINE PROBLEM OR DEMONSTRABLE PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT. AS THE LIKELIHOOD OF PROGRESS DOES NOT SEEM PROMISING, WE FACE THE VERY REAL RISK HERE OF CONTINUING PERIODIC CRISES OVER THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE SYRIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD LEBANON. ADDED TO THIS IS A WORSENING IN THE AREA AND IN LEBANON OF THE US POSITION WHICH HAS BECOME IN ARAB EYES INCREASINGLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE ISRAELIS AND THEREFORE SUBJECT TO ATTACK. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE ARE SUGGESTING THAT A REDUCTION IN STAFF BE STUDIED.

2. ANY REDUCTION FINALLY DECIDED UPON MUST BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED AND PHASED AS OTHERWISE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF OUR INTENTION TO REDUCE OUR STAFF WOULD HAVE A VERY DISQUIETING EFFECT BOTH AMONG THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. IN MY JUDGMENT THERE ARE TWO MAJOR REASONS FOR

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REDUCING THE STAFF. THE FIRST IS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPOSED TO TERRORIST ACTIVITY AND THEREBY REDUCE TO SOME EXTENT THE JOB OF OUR SECURITY SECTION. IN THIS CATEGORY WE WOULD RECOMMEND THE REDUCTION OF PEOPLE WHOSE JOBS ARE NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE OPERATION OF THIS MISSION. THE SECOND CATEGORY IS THE REGIONAL PERSONNEL WHOSE SERVICES ARE EQUALLY, IF NOT MORE, NEEDED IN OTHER POSTS IN THE AREA OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY. WITH THE CLOSURE OF THE BEIRUT AIRPORT DURING THE DISTURBANCES WE HAD SECURITY AND OTHER TECHNICAL PERSONNEL HERE WHO COULD NOT LEAVE TO SERVICE ANOTHER POST NO MATTER HOW URGENT OR DESPERATE THE REQUIREMENT WAS. IN ADDITION, REGIONAL PERSONNEL SPEND A MAJOR PORTION OF THEIR TIME TRAVELLING AND ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE RISK OF LEAVING THEIR FAMILIES ALONE HERE IN TIMES OF CRISES.

3. WITH THESE FACTORS IN MIND, I HAVE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS TO MAKE FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION. I HAVE DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM WITH SELECTED MEMBERS OF THE MISSION, INCLUDING THE HEADS OF THE REGIONAL OFFICES LISTED IMMEDIATELY BELOW EXCEPT FOR THE HEAD OF THE REGIONAL MARINE HEADQUARTERS.

A. REGIONAL SECTIONS

- (1) REGIONAL TECHNICAL CENTER 7 PEOPLE
- (2) REGIONAL SECURITY SUPERVISOR 1 PERSON
- (3) REGIONAL MARINE HEADQUARTERS 7 PEOPLE
- (4) REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CENTER 6 PEOPLE

4. THESE OFFICES COULD PRESUMABLY OPERATE EFFECTIVELY FROM ANOTHER POST IN THE AREA. THE TRANSFER OF THE REGIONAL TECHNICAL CENTER AND THE REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE WOULD INVOLVE THE MOVEMENT OF CONSIDERABLE QUANTITIES OF EQUIPMENT AND THUS WOULD BE EXPENSIVE, ALTHOUGH THE REGIONAL TECHNICAL CENTER SENT ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF THEIR EQUIPMENT TO SAFEHAVEN DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING. A PARTIAL TRANSFER OF THE SECTIONS WOULD NOT APPEAR PRACTICAL. ON THE OTHER HAND, I UNDERSTAND NEITHER THE REGIONAL TECHNICAL CENTER NOR THE REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PER SE HAVE TO BE AT THE SAME POST. THE RTC, RMO AND RSS SHOULD PROBABLY BE AT ONE POST. THE TRANSFER OF THE REGIONAL MARINE HEADQUARTERS WOULD REDUCE OUR
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MILITARY COMPLEMENT AND THUS BE OF SOME POLITICAL ADVANTAGE, GIVEN THE LARGE NUMBER OF MARINES WE HAVE HERE TO GUARD THE EMBASSY PREMISES.

5. WITH THE TRANSFER THE EMBASSY WOULD HAVE A CONTINUING REQUIREMENT FOR A REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE, A SECRETARY, AND ONE SEABEE.

6. STAFF WHOSE FUNCTIONS ARE NOT ESSENTIAL TO LEBANON OR WHICH COULD BE REDUCED IN SIZE ARE:

A. REGIONAL LIBRARIAN (HER JOB COULD BE HANDLED FROM ANY NEARBY POST WITH THE EXCEPTION OF TEL AVIV AS WELL AS FROM BEIRUT .)

B. RAPA (I QUESTION THE ESSENTIALITY OF THIS POSITION IN TERMS OF THE COST OF THE OPERATION. ALTHOUGH RAPA DOES PERFORM CERTAIN OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS IN LEBANON, HIS REGIONAL ADVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE TRAVEL AND COULD BE BASED IN ANY NEARBY ARAB POST.)

C. REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIC OFFICER. (THIS IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST CONVENIENT PLACE FOR HIM TO BE LOCATED BUT GIVEN THE SECURITY PROBLEMS HERE HE COULD PROBABLY ALMOST AS EFFECTIVELY OPERATE FROM ATHENS OR SOME OTHER NEA POST. AS PRESENT INCUMBENT HAS ONLY RECENTLY HAD TO MOVE IN BEIRUT FOR SECURITY REASONS, THE TRANSFER SHOULD BE DEFERRED. HOUGHTON

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2961

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 7722

EXDIS

D. MILITARY ATTACHE OFFICE. WE CURRENTLY HAVE THREE ATTACHES WHO ARE PRIME TARGETS FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO MILITARY ATTACHES BY THE ARABS WHO TEND TO USE THEM AS THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ARM OF A MISSION. AS THE FUNCTIONS OF THE NAVAL AND AIR ATTACHES HERE ARE SOMEWHAT MARGINAL, IT WOULD NOT SEEM PRUDENT FOR THEM TO RUN THAT RISK. WHAT THE EMBASSY REALLY NEEDS IS AN ASY OR MARINE CORPS

COLONEL AS DATT WITH AN ASSISTANT AND SUCH SUPPORT PERSONNEL
AS ARE NECESSARY TO HANDLE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR LEBANON AND
THE BI- WEEKLY MATS FLIGHT. ONE CONVENIENT WAY OF EFFECTING
REDUCTION WOULD BE NOT TO REPLACE COLONEL GALLO WHEN HE LEAVES
IN OCTOBER.

E. LEGAL ATTACHE (FBI). AS THE FUNCTIONS OF THIS OFFICE
WOULD NOT APPEAR ESSENTIAL TO THIS PARTICULAR POST, HE COULD
BE STATIONED ELSEWHERE IN THE AREA.

F. BNDD (POSSIBLY COULD BE CUT FROM THREE TO TWO AGENTS.)

G. VOA. TECHNICAL MONITORING OFFICER. AS HIS FUNCTIONS INVOLVE
VETTING VOA BROADCASTS IN A VARIETY OF AREA COUNTRIES, HE COULD
OPERATE AS EFFECTIVELY OUT OF ANY NEARBY POST.

THE TOTAL OF PARS 3 AND 6 ARE 29.

7. THIS WOULD APPEAR ALL WE SHOULD DO FOR A START. THERE ARE A
NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES WHICH WE HAVE AVOIDED. FOR EXAMPLE THE

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OFFICE OF THE FAA AND THE REGIONAL CAA COULD PROBABLY OPERATE
ELSEWHERE AS WELL. HOWEVER, THEIR PERSONNEL ARE WELL KNOWN IN
AVIATION CIRCLES AND THEIR TRANSFER AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME COULD
BE NOTED WITH CONCERN BY THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND THE LEBANESE
GOVERNMENT.

8. IF THE DEPARTMENT DECIDES TO ACT ON THESE SUGGESTIONS
THE MOVES SHOULD BE MADE OVER A PERIOD OF TIME IN ORDER TO
ATTRACT THE LEAST ATTENTION LOCALLY. WE MAY LATER DEPENDING
ON THE SITUATION HAVE TO CUT MORE. WE WOULD HOPE THAT MOST OF THE
RELOCATIONS WOULD BE TEMPORARY AND THAT THE SITUATION IN THE
AREA WOULD HAVE IMPROVED SUFFICIENTLY BY THE TIME THE NEW EMBASSY
IS CONSTRUCTED HOPEFULLY BY EARLY 1976 TO PERMIT THEIR RETURN.

9. THESE SUGGESTIONS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH AMBASSADOR
BUFFUM. HOUGHTON

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